

dead, it was to seek to make the ancestors happy and to obtain their blessing upon their descendants. Most philosophers were absorbed in the problem of bettering existing human society. To be sure, Buddhism had some things in common with such ancient Chinese thinkers as Hsiin Tzii. The belief in the reign of law in the universe and retribution according to strict justice were akin to the Indian conception of *karma* which Buddhism inherited. The more thoughtful among the Taoists, too, with their sympathy with meditation and their suspicion that the physical world, including the *ego*, might prove an illusion, were somewhat in accord with Buddhist aspirations. Even here, however, the similarity was by no means complete. Yet, as we shall see, Buddhism was to have some of its greatest triumphs in China and was to persist there after it had all but disappeared from the land of its birth.

After the Buddha's death, his teachings continued to spread, although at first rather slowly. Under the most powerful of its early converts, Asoka, a monarch who ruled over much of India in the third century B.C., Buddhism entered upon a period of rapid expansion. In the second century B.C., under Menander, a Greek who hewed out a principality for himself in the wake of the armies of Alexander the Great, and whose domains were in Bactria, northwest of India, and in India itself, Buddhism prospered. In the second century A.D., Kanishka, the powerful (Kushan) monarch of the branch of the Yiieh Chih who ruled in what is now Northwest India and Afghanistan, became a devoted patron of the faith. Thus Buddhism was prominent in some of those countries with which the Chinese were establishing contacts.

through the westward expansion and commerce of
the Han. It is
not strange that, an enthusiastically missionary
faith, it now made
its appearance in the Middle Kingdom.

In the course of its spread, Buddhism, like all
great faiths, de-
veloped schools of thought. The chief divisions are
known as
Mahayana and Hinayana, the "Greater Vehicle"
and the "Lesser
Vehicle." Mahayana, sometimes called Northern
Buddhism, ex-
alts the *bodhisattva*, one who, with *nirvana* within
his grasp, post-
pones entrance into it and is born and reborn until
he can make
possible the salvation of all living beings. Prayer
and worship
were absent from the Buddha's teachings, for he
believed that